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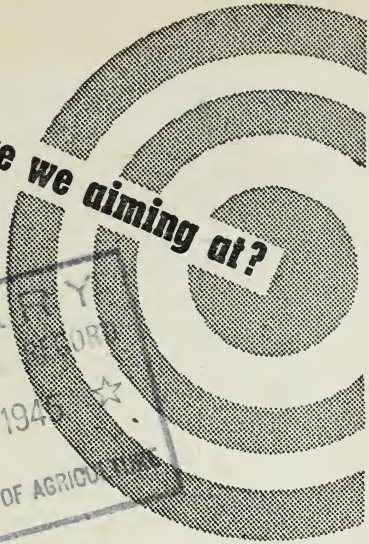

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

A FOREST CONSERVATION PROGRAM

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FOREST SERVICE
U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

AIS-10

THE GOAL

To keep our forest lands productive,

To conserve forest growing stock, and

To double annual timber growth—

So that the forests of the Nation,

Both public and private,

Will sustain industry,

Provide more employment, and

Contribute fully to the prosperity, security, and well-being of the people.

At the same time our forests must protect watersheds, serve recreation and wildlife needs, and supply a multitude of other forest products and services in abundance.

Issued July 1945

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

Forest Land

We have plenty of forest land in this country—630 million acres, one-third of the United States.

But that doesn't necessarily mean productive timberland—168 million acres are in *noncommercial types* (alpine, semidesert, chaparral, or other types not suited or not available for growing timber of commercial quality or quantity, although it may be valuable for watershed, grazing, wildlife, etc.).

Of the 462 million acres of commercial forest land—77 million acres are virtually nonproductive as a result of destructive cutting and fire.

All but 100 million acres of the remainder has been cut over, and this cut-over land is *now producing only about half of what it should.*

Volume of Timber

In 1909, total saw-timber stand was estimated at 2,826 billion feet.

In 1938, total saw-timber stand was estimated at 1,764 billion feet.

Thus our *total volume of standing saw timber was reduced almost 40 percent in 30 years.* Probably it was reduced even more, as the earlier estimate did not include some species now considered commercial.

Three-fourths of our commercial forest area is east of the Great Plains, but more

than two-thirds of the remaining saw timber is in the West.

The whole eastern half of the country now has only about as much saw timber as the 6 percent of our forest area in the Douglas-fir region of Oregon and Washington. The available stand east of the Great Plains is not much more than half enough to sustain the present rate of cut.

Growth and Drain

In 1938 total new growth was 11.2 billion cubic feet; total drain in that depression year was 13.4 billion cubic feet.

During the war estimated total annual drain on our forests has varied between 16 and 17 billion cubic feet. Current annual growth probably remains only about 11.2 billion cubic feet.

Growth is thus less than three-fourths of drain.

For saw timber, growth is not much more than half of drain. And note that much of the drain is of high quality old-growth timber, whereas much of the new growth is of greatly inferior quality.

("Drain" includes not only timber removed by cutting but also losses due to fires, insects, disease, and other causes.)

Forest Ownership (Commercial Forest Land)

Public (Federal, State, and community), 121 million acres.

Private, 341 million acres.

About 40 percent of private forest land is in farm ownership.

Almost 30 percent is in nonfarm holdings of less than 5,000 acres each.

The other 30 percent is in industrial or other holdings of over 5,000 acres each.

Private lands include by far the greater part of United States potential timber growing capacity; they furnish about 90 percent of the present cut of forest products.

Thus, *the Nation is primarily dependent upon private lands for its timber supplies.*

Private Forest Lands

Many forest owners are using good forest practice. The "Tree Farm" plan, where its principles have been adopted and put into practice by industrial owners, and other examples of good woods management, are demonstrating that good forestry is practical.

But some 80 percent of the cutting on private lands is still done without conscious regard to future crops, and a large part of this cutting is of a very destructive character.

Each year during the war, with the Nation's need for lumber becoming increasingly critical, several large mills have had to shut down because the saw-timber supply available to them was exhausted.

Even in the far West, where the bulk of our remaining old-growth timber is located, the situation is not rosy. Twenty out of fifty-odd mills producing over 90 percent of the lumber cut in California face dismantlement within 10 years due to the exhaustion of the local timber supply.

Half of the sawmills, pulp, shingle, veneer, and other log-using plants in Oregon and Washington, representing 30 percent of regional production, have private timber in sight for not more than 5 years of operation. They cannot all obtain public timber to keep going.

Postwar prosperity must be built upon a program of plenty, not of scarcity. A program of plenty in forestry will call for an annual timber growth of some 21½ billion cubic feet, according to Forest Service estimates.

This means the Nation's present annual timber growth will have to be practically doubled.

There is the real challenge!

The potential timber-producing capacity of our forest land is sufficient ultimately to supply all our prospective needs, and a margin for export, *provided we take the necessary measures to raise annual timber growth to an adequate level.*

But it is only by careful husbanding of the remaining old growth and proper management of existing young growth that we can hope to bridge the gap between exhaustion of available supply and the fruition of whatever forest conservation program the Nation may follow. Failure in this will inevitably lead to drastic curtailment of timber consumption.

A PROGRAM

To achieve the over-all goal of permanent and adequate timber supplies in the United States, the Forest Service believes a three-point program is necessary:

1. *Public regulation.*

Purpose: To stop destructive cutting and forest deterioration, and to keep forest land reasonably productive.

Proposed plan: Basic standards that indicate the levels of forest practice needed to attain this purpose should be set up by

Federal legislation. The States would have the opportunity to enact and administer regulatory legislation consistent with the requirements of the Federal law, and the Federal Government would help pay the cost of administration. However, in any State that failed to do so within a prescribed period, the Secretary of Agriculture would administer regulation under the provisions of the Federal law. Rules of forest practice consistent with the basic standards would be developed locally with the help of area advisory boards, under a procedure that would assure full opportunity for investigation and participation by operators and other interested persons.

At the national level, a representative advisory council would be set up to advise on general policy.

The basic standards of forest practice set up by Federal legislation would—

Provide for reasonable precautions against forest fire, and loss from insects and disease.

Safeguard proper use of forest lands, and prevent improper exploitation by:

a. Providing for adequate restocking after cutting.

b. Prohibiting premature or wasteful cutting in young stands.

c. Providing for reserving a sufficient growing stock of desirable trees to keep the land reasonably productive.

d. Preventing avoidable damage to uncut trees or young growth.

e. Regulating grazing to prevent damage to tree growth and protect the watershed, and

f. Prohibiting clear cutting except where it is silviculturally desirable or the land is to be put to some other suitable use.

Results—

This regulatory plan would not require as high standards of forest practice as those already adopted by many progressive timberland owners or as are generally in effect on the National Forests.

It would not restrict any forest owner from cutting when he wanted to, nor require him to cut if he did not want to. It would simply provide that if he did cut he must follow reasonably good practice.

It would provide the basic "rules of the game" necessary in any enterprise.

It would not preclude some temporary curtailment of output in the next few decades, but *it would keep our remaining forests productive and thus maintain the opportunity for private forest enterprise.*

2. *Public aid to forest owners.*

Purpose: To encourage private enterprise in forestry.

Proposed measures (to be carried out mainly in cooperation with the States):

Extension of adequate fire protection to all forest lands needing it.

More adequate protection against destructive forest insects and disease.

Increased technical aid in forest management and wood utilization for timber owners and operators.

Public assistance in the establishment of cooperative forest management and marketing associations.

Provision for long-term credit to forest owners to facilitate sustained yield management and encourage rehabilitation of run-down forests.

Provision for insurance on growing timber.

Promoting improved systems of taxation of forest lands.

An expanded program of research in forest management, protection, and utilization, to improve timber-growing techniques and develop new and better uses and markets for forest products.

Such cooperative aids would help forest owners make the transition from destructive cutting to continuous production, and would encourage them to go beyond the simple requirements of public regulation to real sustained-yield management.

3. *More Public Forests.*

Purpose: To rehabilitate depleted forest lands; to help protect the public interest in our forest resources.

Lands for which public ownership would be desirable:

Intermingled privately owned forest lands within the boundaries of existing national forests.

Forest lands where the productivity is too low for private owners to be expected to hold them for timber growing.

Lands which lie in such rough or inaccessible country that they have little attraction for the owners.

Lands so denuded as to offer no prospect of income for many decades. Many such lands are chronically tax delinquent.

Certain areas where acute problems of watershed protection, or need for protection or development of scenic or recrea-

tional values, or other public interests, are paramount.

Certain tracts of good timberland that vitally influence timber management in adjacent national forest lands or affect the welfare of dependent communities.

Within the borders of national forests and purchase units already established are 50 million acres of private land. Of these some 36 million acres should be acquired by the public. Perhaps 50 million acres outside of existing national forests and purchase units should be given national forest status. For perhaps another 50 million acres, State or community ownership seems desirable.

Adequate provision for protection, development, and utilization of the forest resources in accordance with sound principles of multiple-use management is of course a requisite in public ownership.

Postwar Forestry Work

The Nation's forests offer opportunities for employment for many thousands of those who will come out of the armed forces and war industries.

Useful and needed work in forest restoration and development includes:

Improvement and expansion of facilities for forest protection and management.

Fire hazard reduction.

Measures to improve timber growth.

Reforestation—planting.

Range improvement, including revegetation of depleted ranges.

Watershed improvement and flood control.

Development of forest research and administrative facilities.

New forest recreational facilities.

Improvement of fishing streams and wildlife habitat.

Such work can be undertaken immediately on public forests. A vast amount of work along similar lines is needed on private forest lands. Public funds may appropriately help finance work on private lands needed for protection when it is of collective benefit. The public could well help finance more types of work if there were assurance that the public investment would be adequately safeguarded. Public regulation would help provide such assurance.

A comprehensive national program of forestry, including a postwar work program of forest restoration and development, will:

Furnish more security for present forest industries and their dependent workers.

Develop the possibilities for perhaps 2½ million permanent new jobs based on increasingly productive natural resources.

The measures which will promote abundant and continuing supplies of timber also generally will help to conserve water supplies; regulate stream flow and reduce floods; provide better hunting, fishing, and recreation; contribute to the scenic beauty of our country, and provide many other values and benefits of the forests.

References

For more information and detailed discussion of the forest situation, consult:

Forest-Resource Conservation. U. S. Dept. Agr. Yearbook (Farmers in a Changing World) 1940: 458–488.

Report of the Chief of the Forest Service, 1943 and 1944.

Some Plain Facts About the Forests. U. S. Dept. Agr. Misc. Pub. 543.

TABLE 1.—*Commercial forest land*

	Million acres
Farm woodland	138.8
Industrial and other nonfarm	202.1
Total private	340.9
Community and State	24.1
National forests	81.5
Other Federal	15.2
Total public	120.8
Total commercial	461.7

TABLE 2.—*Commercial forest area by character of growth* [1]

	East	West	Total
	Million acres	*Million acres*	*Million acres*
Saw timber	134.7	78.2	212.9
Cordwood	82.8	18.0	100.8
Fair to satisfactory restocking	62.5	8.8	71.3
Poor to nonrestocking	63.6	13.1	76.7
Total United States	343.6	118.1	461.7

[1] 1936–38 data. Reappraisal in progress, 1945.

TABLE 3.—*Timber volume, growth, and drain* [1]

	Volume	Growth	Drain
	Billion board feet	*Billion board feet*	*Billion board feet*
Saw timber:			
East	542.5	25.8	30.3
West	1,221.1	6.2	17.5
Total United States	1,763.6	32.0	47.8
	Billion cubic feet	*Billion cubic feet*	*Billion cubic feet*
All timber:			
East	223.7	9.3	10.0
West	295.4	2.0	3.5
Total United States	519.1	11.3	13.5

[1] 1936–38 data. Reappraisal in progress, 1945.